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Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
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Item 7 of the provisional agenda
Implementation of article 22 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Report provided by the specialized agencies of the United Nations on the Implementation of the Convention in areas falling within the scope of their activities

Note by the Secretary-General

Addendum

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

1. On behalf of the Committee, the Secretariat invited the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), on 16 October 2000, to submit to the Committee a report on information provided by States to FAO on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in areas falling within the scope of its activities, which would supplement the information contained in the reports of the States parties to the Convention that will be considered at the twenty-fourth session. Annexed to the present note are country briefs prepared by FAO.

2. Other information sought by the Committee refers to activities, programmes and policy decisions undertaken by FAO to promote the implementation of the Convention.

3. The reports annexed hereto were submitted in compliance with the Committee's request.

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Annex

Country briefs submitted to FAO on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Burundi

The agricultural sector in Burundi provides 50 per cent of the GDP and employs 94 per cent of the active economic labour force. In recent years, the performance of the sector has been decreasing — 3 per cent for food crops and 17 per cent for beans, which are the staple food. This is due mainly to drought, the increase of plant diseases and civil unrest.

FAO has been requested to formulate a national strategy on food security, which will coordinate all sectoral policies and strengthen national capacity on natural resources management and planning. It will concern, in particular, the issues of access to land and the updating of the legislation on land tenure, forests and swamp areas. Social equity and gender equality are important dimensions of the above activities.

FAO also participated in the inter-agency effort to design a policy for the economic recovery of the country. Three main areas were identified:

(a) Promotion of peace and human rights;

(b) Access to basic services;

(c) Development of rural areas.

Some measures, including off-farm activities such as handicraft and brick-making, are proposed as means to diversify the rural economy and provide labour for rural populations, in particular, youth.

FAO's support, through both its technical cooperation programme and funding from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and bilateral agencies, has concentrated on the following areas:

(a) Food security;

(b) Natural resource management and environment rehabilitation programmes;

(c) Humanitarian assistance;

(d) Policy formulation on rural development.

The FAO gender programme is implementing three subregional programmes in east and southern Africa.

The first one deals with gender, biodiversity and local knowledge systems to strengthen agriculture and rural development. The global aim is to increase understanding among rural people, development workers and policy makers about the value of men's and women's distinct knowledge and skills to the management of agro-biodiversity for food security and to strengthen the capacity of key partner

The second one develops and tests an integrated sustainable development framework and strategy that address poverty alleviation in the context of participation, information and communication, capacity-building, equal opportunities and resource management.

The third one is focused on the training of trainers on the methodology of socio-economic and gender analysis. Although Burundi is not in the first list of pilot countries, the results of the above initiatives are intended to be disseminated and applied in other countries of the subregion, as appropriate.

Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan benefits from the overall gender programme in Central and Eastern Europe. The activities focus on three aspects:

(a) Improvement of the knowledge base on men's and women's contribution to the agricultural economy. A pilot methodology for collection of data, disaggregated by sex, from the agricultural sector is being designed for extensive use in the subregion;

(b) Preparation of a national action plan for the integration of rural women into agricultural and rural development. Several subregional seminars have taken place, using the socio-economic and gender analysis tools to sensitize development specialists and decision makers and upgrade their skills on participatory and gender-responsive planning.

(c) Training of trainers on socio-economic and gender analysis. Two gender specialists from the country were introduced to this methodology at FAO headquarters. Relevant materials have been translated into Russian and are being used by non-governmental organizations and in governmental structures.

Maldives

Since Maldives depends heavily on the import of food, especially vegetables and poultry products, FAO has given top priority to the implementation of a special programme on food security to enhance local food production. In that framework a national plan of operation and a national plan document were prepared and approved by the Government. Emphasis is put on agricultural intensification and water control. The expected results are the improvement of the nutritional status and food security of the population.

Furthermore, FAO is executing several other projects aiming at increasing agricultural production, including fisheries. Some projects, such as the "establishment" of fruit and vegetable plots for the Women's Committee are benefiting rural women directly and enhancing their income-generating opportunities and the food security of their families. Others, such as the establishment of community vegetable and fruit tree nurseries and community poultry development are intended to increase food production at the local level.

Nicaragua

The activities of FAO in the Latin American and Caribbean region fall within the strategic areas and needs identified as priority for the advancement of women and form part of the FAO Plan of Action in support of rural women. The emphasis is focused on the promotion of institutional changes in the drawing up of development policies and strategies so as to enable the State to respond to the different requirements of men and women as a central axis of development strategy.

Within this framework, during the period from 1999 to June 2000 FAO provided technical assistance to the Nicaraguan Institute for Women (INIM) through the implementation of the project "Establishment of a programme for rural women" (TCP/NIC/8923), the objective of which was to support the Government in establishing a programme for rural women. The programme seeks to contribute to rural development from a gender perspective with a view to reducing rural poverty, improving food security and strengthening INIM as the lead entity in the formulation of policies in support of Nicaraguan women.

It should also be pointed out that, through the project activities, support will be given to the Nicaraguan Institute of Statistics and Censuses in the revision of the census form for the next national agricultural census in order to incorporate changes making it possible to break down some variables by sex and to incorporate other gender considerations. At the same time, the project will support the Office of the First Lady in the preparation of needs assessments in the municipalities of La Conquista and Santa Teresa, thus facilitating the obtaining of funding for poor women in the area.

In order to support the process of understanding the situation of women in the context of land tenure in Nicaragua, FAO, in coordination with the University of Pavia, has initiated a case study on women and the right to land. This study analyses the advances and obstacles encountered in the process of the granting of individual and community land deeds to women under the agrarian reform programmes implemented over the last 30 years.

Among the preliminary conclusions, mention may be made of institutional advances at various points in the process, either through legal changes that have recognized women as co-owners with men as heads of households in the case of homes or as individual owners, or in some cases through women's cooperatives. In spite of these advances, it is clear that the lack of implementing regulations in the case of some laws, as well other institutional and cultural factors, mean that in practice the impact of those measures has not resulted in substantial changes.

In actuality, the functioning of the land markets seems to be the basic mechanism for the acquisition of agricultural land. Peasants have access to land through the sales market and through rental. In this context, women continue to have limited access to land, owing to the difficulties of obtaining institutional credit, as well as the prevalence of cultural patterns that inhibit the entrepreneurial and productive role of women.

In support for the strengthening of national capacities in the area of gender analysis in the agricultural sector, FAO conducted, with the support of INIM and ANDAR, a seminar on the training of trainers on socio-economic and gender analysis for Central American professionals. The event was organized from 2 to 13

October 2000 in Managua, Nicaragua, with the participation of nine countries in support for the national plans for the promotion of gender equity and for the advancement of women arising out of the Platform for Action adopted at Beijing (1995) at the Fourth World Conference on Women.

The seminar was organized as a part of the activities for inter-agency cooperation between FAO and the World Food Programme (WFP), with the aim of strengthening capacities of persons working in rural sector institutions on the identification and formulation of policies, programmes and projects with gender perspectives. Thus, the training of trainers on socio-economic and gender analysis gave an opportunity to representatives of countries of the region to enhance their knowledge of gender themes, improve the use of adequate tools to integrate socio-economic and gender aspects in development processes and establish strategic alliances with regional partners.

The main objective of the seminar was to strengthen understanding of the conceptual and analytical framework of socio-economic and gender analysis and to facilitate the use of practical tools to support the mainstreaming of the gender perspective in programmes, projects, institutions and policies in the rural sector.

Viet Nam

Viet Nam remains a predominantly agrarian society. As much as 80 per cent of the total population live in rural areas and two thirds of them depend on farming for their living. The performance of the Vietnamese economy has recently deteriorated, reflecting structural weaknesses compounded by the impact of the regional crisis. Due to this, in 1997 rural growth slowed, and income inequality has risen. Although the country is, on the whole, food secure (gross output food per capita in 1997 was 398 kg), poverty is still widespread, mainly among the ethnic minorities in the hilly and mountainous areas and among the most vulnerable segments of the population (children, women, disabled, elderly). The average GNP per capita was estimated at around US$ 350 per annum in 1998. Poverty, as defined by an internationally comparable poverty line based on expenditure on a food and basic non-food goods basket, is close to 30 per cent today, down from over 70 per cent in the mid-1980s.

On the basis of Viet Nam's very low income per capita alone, the country could be considered one of the least developed countries. However, Viet Nam has achieved a relatively high level of social development. According to UNDP's *Human Development Report 1999*, Viet Nam ranks 110 out of 174 countries based on a composite "human development" index of life expectancy, educational attainment and income.

High levels of rural poverty and food insecurity persist, particularly in remote upland areas inhabited by ethnic minorities, and in some coastal provinces. Indeed, a striking 90 per cent of the families classified as living below the poverty line are located, and make their livelihoods, in rural areas. A better future for the rural poor is, however, within reach. With an enabling framework for rural development, strengthened institutions and policies in support of private farmers and entrepreneurs, further economic reform and sound rural investment, the destiny of rural areas can be turned around. Building on the successes of previous reform will have beneficial impacts on social development as well as on productivity. It will also help to enhance the livelihoods and well-being of particularly vulnerable groups,

including ethnic minorities, women, the underemployed and jobless, and the landless.

The Government has recognized the urgency of accelerating development in rural areas. Investment in rural infrastructure and services has been increased, and a number of support programmes have been initiated. Among them, National Programme for Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction (1996-2000) includes various poverty alleviation initiatives, with an emphasis on subsidized and directed credit. The 1,715 Poor Communes Programme (1998-2005) is seeking to generate income and employment, improve infrastructure and build local administrative capacity in the poorest areas. The Five Million Hectare Reforestation Programme (1998-2010), which builds on the Greening the Barren Hills Programme (programme 327), is aimed at speeding up reforestation activities, improving protection, providing raw materials for forest processing industries and creating new jobs for rural households. Lastly, but not least, the Rural Development Strategy being formulated by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development will be critical in providing a comprehensive and guiding framework towards the year 2010.

FAO is particularly active in Viet Nam in the fields of nutrition, food security, agriculture, forestry and fisheries. Priority issues are food security and sustainable agricultural development, including forestry and agroforestry activities. The main focus of FAO's role in Viet Nam is on the provision of policy advice. For instance, current activities to support policy development include assistance to restructure the Agricultural Research System, support the transition to a newer type of cooperative system, formulate the National Programme for Food Security, mainstream gender concerns and support the Five Million Hectare Reforestation Programme. The Government highly appreciates FAO's neutral character. Donors often welcome the involvement of FAO in sensitive policy issues. Complementing this role in policy development and analysis at the national level, FAO continues to be involved in the planning, formulation and implementation of projects targeted at the rural poor in order to improve the quality of their lives. Examples of FAO's involvement in this area include aquaculture promotion, nutrition education, participatory watershed management, integrated pest management through participatory methods etc. In Viet Nam, FAO is also particularly active in the formulation of agricultural investment projects on behalf of a number of financial institutions (World Bank, Asian Development Bank, International Fund for Agricultural Development). Highly specialized technical advice is provided to the country, upon request (pest control, improvement of genetic resources, development of a market information network, agriculture insurance etc.) FAO is also playing a major role in coordinating activities in food security through a donor Government thematic group, established in mid-1999. Another technical working group on gender issues was recently established at the Ministry. The FAO representative is the permanent co-chairperson of the group, which is chaired by the Vice-Minister.

In the framework of United Nations agency collaboration, FAO has been working with the World Food Programme, UNDP and UNICEF. A proposal on gender dimensions for policy and programme planning in Viet Nam's transitional agriculture and rural development was submitted to UNDP for its consideration in August 1999. It is aimed at supporting the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in the establishment of a technical working group on gender. The working group serves to strengthen the activities related to women's access to resources, opportunities and technologies in all the Ministry's technical activities. At

the same time, the working group also provides women-centred and research-based technical advice to the Ministry, other concerned technical institutions and international support groups in donor-funded projects and programmes and national-level policies for women in agriculture and rural development. The FAO representative is the co-vice-chairman of the working group.

The long-term vision for the joint donor/Government gender strategy is the social, economic and political advancement of women and gender equality in Viet Nam. It will entail creating an overall enabling policy environment, combined with a gender-aware society and gender-sensitive institutional structures, policy-making processes and practices. These will go beyond targeting women and family programmes and aim to analyse and influence macro and sectoral policies and programmes. The ultimate objective is to create a "level playing field" whereby women and men will be in an equal position to gain access to and utilize basic social services and factors of production and to make the necessary social, economic and political choices and decisions on issues, policies and programmes affecting their livelihoods and well-being.

This vision is owned first and foremost by the Government — through networks in every ministry and province — and at central and local levels. A number of donors have expressed their support, including UNDP, the World Bank, the Royal Netherlands Embassy, CIDA, Danida, AusAid, Ford Foundation, Asian Development Bank, UNICEF, FAO, UNIFEM, Oxfam GB etc.

The workshops (launching workshop, 26 October 2000; second plan of action for the advancement of women workshop, 8 November 2000; joint donor/Government working group workshop, 1 December 2000) generate a wider understanding of the issues and demonstrate the importance of addressing gender in all national and international sectoral plans and programmes, as well as the relevance of gender to all sectors.

It has been agreed that the socio-economic and gender analysis programme will be introduced and adapted in Viet Nam, through the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. FAO has been collaborating with the Ministry for the past two years. The regional women-in-development/gender officer in the FAO regional office for Asia and the Pacific (Bangkok, Thailand) was instrumental in establishing the technical working group. The group seeks to improve coordination among institutions inside and outside the Ministry and the donor community in instituting the integration of gender and women's issues into agriculture and rural development sectors. FAO has been involved in the process of designing, with the Ministry, a project involving the promotion of sustainable and equitable agricultural and rural development.